

The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #7737-83
27 October 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Major General Edward B. Atkeson, USA
National Intelligence Officer for General Purpose Forces

SUBJECT : Current Operations in Grenada [] 25X1

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you of the progress of current military operations in Grenada and to point out certain insights gained thus far in the process.* [] 25X1

2. US military staffs were informed of the President's desire to prepare a capability to launch such an operation on the evening of Thursday, 20 October 1983. The final go-ahead was issued on Sunday, 23 October. D-Day was to be Tuesday, 25 October, H-Hour 0500. Very strict operations security was clamped on planning. Washington officials and field commanders involved were instructed to limit knowledge to officers whom they knew "by their first names." [] 25X1

3. The chain of command was established from the National Command Authority through J-3 OJCS to US Atlantic Command, Norfolk (LANTCOM). For all practical purposes, LANTCOM accomplished the planning, coordination and initiation of the operation. [] 25X1

4. From LANTCOM, command passes through Task Force Headquarters, under Vice Admiral Metcalf, aboard the helicopter carrier USS Guam, to two subordinate task forces ashore: one Marine at Pearls on the eastern shore, the other Army at Salines on the southwest tip of the island (see map attached). The ground forces initially designated for the operation were a Marine battalion (which was at sea, enroute to Lebanon) and two battalions of Army Rangers. It was envisioned that the rangers would be relieved by two battalions from the 82nd Airborne Division on D+1. [] 25X1

5. The naval task force includes the attack carrier Independence and some 15 other ships. The principal mission of the Independence is to isolate the operational area from possible Cuban or Soviet military intervention. Air

*Note: Reporting from Grenada has been spotty and in some cases contradictory. This memorandum is based on information obtained from the Operations Directorate of the Army Staff. It may not accord with information from other sources in all respects.

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Force elements include heavy airlift assets, AWACS surveillance aircraft, and four C-130 gunships for ground support. []

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6. The original scheme of maneuver envisioned both cross-beach and vertical (helicopter) landings at Pearls by the Marine Landing Team and simultaneous airborne landings by the Rangers at Salines. It was expected that all objectives in both the Pearls and Salines-St. Georges areas would be secured within 24 hours. []

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7. The Marines found the beaches south of Pearls unsuitable for landings and shifted to an all-helicopter landing operation. Touchdown was effected at H-Hour in spite of some anti-aircraft fire. The International Force was to be phased in at the Pearls Airport to secure the area, but subsequent developments required a diversion. Most of the Marine force had to be shifted to the western coast to assist in the attack in the St. Georges' area. Probably because of a risk of an enemy counter-attack at Pearls after the depletion of the Marines, the International contingent was shifted to the more secure airport at Salines. []

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8. The first battalion of Rangers was a little more than a half hour late in arriving at its drop zone at Salines. Barriers on the new airstrip required that the initial landing be by parachute. The second battalion was able to land by aircraft after removal of the barriers. Initial objectives included securing the airfield and the medical school campuses at True Blue and Grand Anse. []

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9. Cuban resistance was sharp and well coordinated from the outset. Instead of completion of the seizure of the capital city in 24 hours and replacement of the Rangers the next day, two battalions of the 82nd Airborne Division had to be brought in expeditiously as reinforcements. Additionally, most of the Marines from Pearls had to be shifted over to the Grand Mal area, north of St. Georges, to strengthen the attack in that sector. As of 0845 on 27 October, most objectives around St. Georges have been secured, but there has been no attempt to enter the city itself. The prison to the east of St. Georges is variously reported as still in Cuban/Grenadian hands and as having been abandoned. The next move will probably be toward Calivigny on the southern coast where additional Cubans are reported to be located. []

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10. As the fighting has continued today, four additional battalions from the 82nd Airborne Division have been phasing into Salines, and a brigade from the 101st Airborne (Airmobile) Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, has been alerted for movement. These units may begin to arrive tomorrow (Friday, 28 October). While the 82nd Airborne Division Headquarters is on the ground in Grenada, it has been deemed unwise to commit the entire division. A third brigade (three battalions) is being held at Fort Bragg for possible contingencies elsewhere. The 101st Airborne--in spite of its name--is not a parachute droppable unit. If further reinforcements are needed, they will probably have to come from the 101st. Movement of mechanized infantry to Grenada would require more time. []

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11. It appears now that Cuban strength on the island was much greater than we expected. As of 0900 hours this morning we had some 1100 Cuban prisoners which is more than we thought were on the whole island.* The total may be half again as many as we have in hand. We are also holding some 1300 Grenadians, most of which have been captured in the last 24 hours. So far, there has been no substantiation of speculation about the presence of Libyan or East German military personnel. [redacted]

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12. The southwest tip of Grenada appears now to have been a virtual Cuban enclave. Almost no Grenadians were encountered in the initial engagements. A storage depot at Frequente is reported to be brimming over with military stocks. It will be interesting to find out what the Cubans had in mind for the area. [redacted]

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13. US casualty reports are available for Army forces only. These indicate eight dead, 32 wounded and five missing, as of 0846 hours this morning. Requirements for Air Force non-combatant evacuation have escalated rapidly. About two-thirds of the 622 persons identified for evacuation thus far have been removed. Additional requirements are anticipated as more Americans are located. [redacted]

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14. In sum:

- The operation was quickly prepared with tight security.
- Nevertheless, the enemy anticipated our attack and prepared a vigorous defense.
- Our intelligence about the size and combat effectiveness of enemy forces--particularly the Cubans--was not good.
- US casualties have not been unduly heavy.
- There is some risk that sporadic fighting may continue as our forces move inland. We will probably have to keep troops on the island for considerably longer than we may have anticipated.
- The strategic value of Grenada may have been even higher than we thought in the eyes of the Cubans. We will have to assess what Havana had in mind for its base there. [redacted]

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Edward B. Atkeson

Attachment:
Map of Grenada

*Other sources indicate that this may be the total number of Cubans on the island, and that only some 700 Cubans have thus far been captured.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: DCI
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FROM : NIO/GPF

SUBJECT : Current Operations in Grenada

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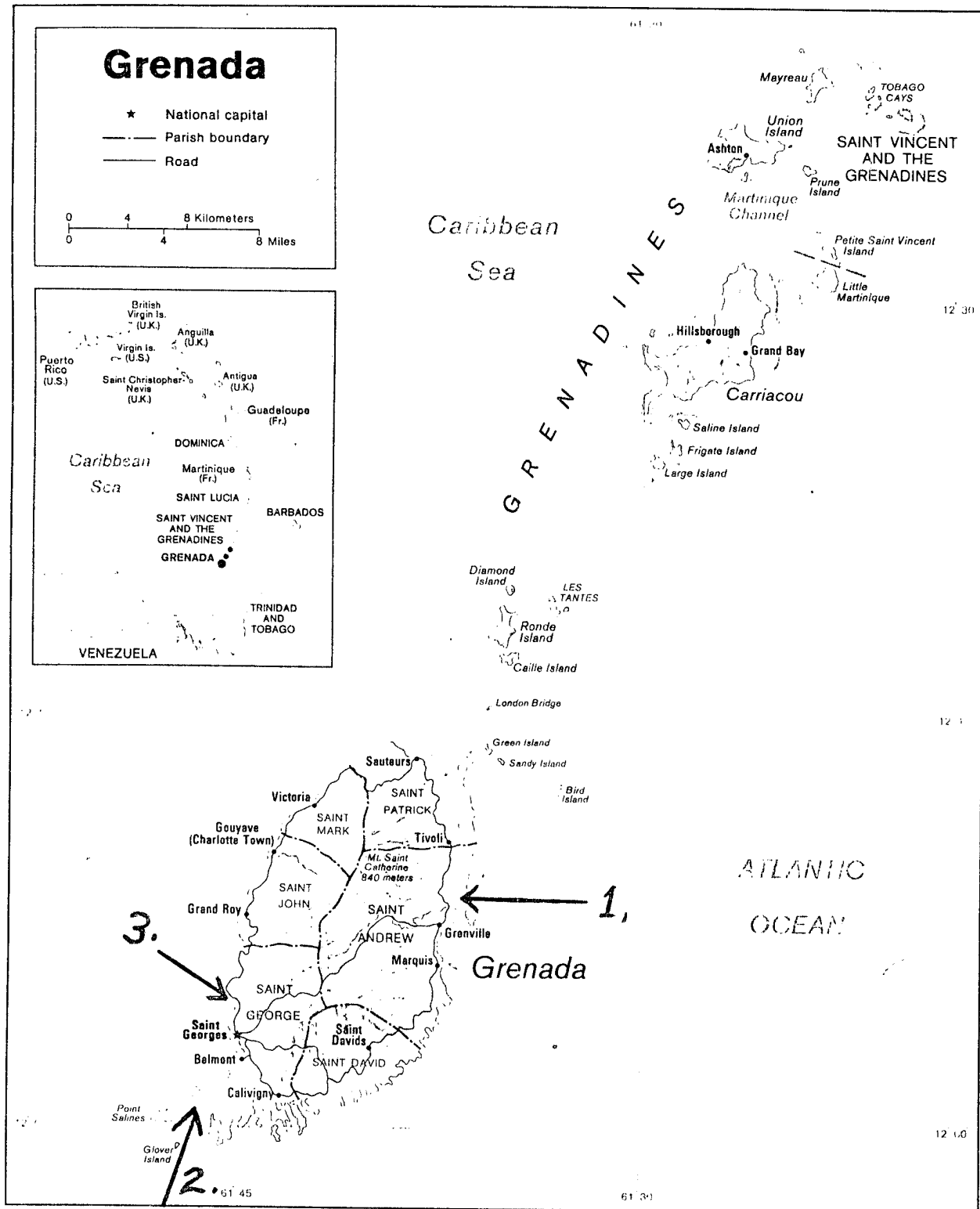
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Base 504728 (546324) 5-81

1. Pearls. Site of US Marine landing 0500, 25 October.
2. Salines. Site of Cuban airfield and US Army Rangers landing 0535, 25 October.
3. Grand Mal. Site of second Marine landing, late 25 October.

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